

## The Canadian Rockies Between the Yellowhead Pass and the Peace River.

By S. PERSCOTT PAT.

Read April 14, 1912.

For the last twenty years the Canadian Rockies have offered a wonderful field for mountaineering activities and exploration has been energetically carried on by climbers from both this country and abroad. The names of many of the important peaks testify to the number of world-famous climbers and mountain explorers who have been lured into this fascinating field but comparatively recently opened up. At first all the exploratory work was limited to the country contiguous to the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, as there were plenty of interesting regions close at hand. But, as the more important of the virgin peaks were conquered one by one, and valley after valley was explored and new glaciers discovered, it became increasingly difficult to push into new lands, more and more time being wasted in getting through the already known area. However, by the year 1909, in spite of the great distance and the amount of time consumed on the trail, all the country up to the Yellowhead Pass, including that around Mt. Robson, the giant peak of all, was explored, and much valuable work had been done in mapping and surveying.

But further than this it was impossible to go until the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway started building its extension to the Pacific Coast via the Yellowhead Pass. When the steel had been laid only as far as Wolf Creek, about one hundred miles east from the pass itself, pioneer exploration into remoter regions was begun from this side, and on July 17, 1910, Prof. J. Norman Collie and Mr. A. L. Munro with their party started with pack horses to get into the new country to the west. They spent some time about Mt. Robson; but there was so much snow on the mountains and the weather was so stormy that climbing was almost out of the question, and they were able to ascend only some of the lesser peaks. They returned down the Smoky River, then over to the Stony and down this stream, along which they found interesting mountains and glaciers. The next summer (1911) they made another trip, this time going in by the Stony River and over a high pass to the Smoky;

then up it to Glacier Creek, which they ascended to Mt. Boss, at the base of which is one of the largest glaciers in the Canadian Rockies. Here they spent most of their time climbing and exploring this region of high mountains, fine snow fields, and big glaciers. An attempt was made to go down the Smoky; but fallen timber and bad muskys in the face of a limited amount of time, changed their minds. So a return was made to Mt. Boss, where the remaining days were spent before being compelled by the lateness of the season to return once more to the Athabasca River by nearly the same route that they had come. However, they accomplished much and brought back information of this unexplored country that aroused much interest in alpine circles. Professor Collic's party was, therefore, the first to go into this new land to the north of the Athabasca for the sake of exploration and climbing.<sup>1</sup>

In the early summer of 1912 I planned to revisit the Canadian Rockies, and at first thought of a trip into the mountains between Laggan and the Yellowhead Pass to do some climbing. Yet, in spite of the fascinations of such a trip, it meant going into a region already known and mapped. That summer the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway had completed its line to the Yellowhead Pass, and trains were being operated as far west as Jasper,—the center of the new park of that name. This presented a rare opportunity to make a trip north of the Athabasca Valley into new regions, now made accessible, where mountains, lakes and rivers, unknown except to a few trappers and prospectors, could be explored. Then too the possibilities for hunting were great, and finding game in a new country is so much more interesting than going to a locality already known to the guide! The idea of investigating the fauna of this area, of locating and defining the ranges of the larger game animals interested me very much. There was a question as to the variety of the mountain sheep north of the Athabasca River. Here was a chance to solve this situation and determine whether it was the same variety as on the south side or an entirely new one. For this reason my plans changed, and on August

<sup>1</sup> In this article I am leaving out of consideration the region about Mt. Robson, as so much has already been written about the various attempts to reach its summit, the final conquest, and the later work on the surrounding peaks. Nothing has yet appeared about this country farther north as far as I am aware, except Professor Collic's interesting account of which I have just given a brief summary. (See *Alpine Journal*, Vol. XXVI, 1912, p. 2.)

8 we set out from Hinton, which is located on the eastern edge of the mountains. Fred Brewster and Beau Gaetz, who had come in here only recently, though they had not as yet been north of the railroad, comprised the other members of the party. We had seven pack horses, as we intended to be gone about eight weeks, and our plan was to get across the Smoky River, where we would hunt as well as investigate the mountains as much as possible between its valley and the Continental Divide.

The first few days were spent in going up Solomon Creek and the Hay River to Rock Lake, where we got our best view of the inside ranges. Though only about 8000 to 9000 feet high, they were very effective in the afternoon light seen from across the lake. Then the Stony River was reached, and the next few days were spent along its valley, from which we got fine views of the very interesting rocky ranges on its southern side. One or two side streams that join the main river opened up their valleys to the glaciers and peaks beyond, making a vista effect that was very fine indeed. It was difficult to make an accurate estimate of the height of these mountains, but probably they range between 9000 and 10,000 feet. Owing to the very warm days, the snow and ice of the glaciers were melting rapidly, causing the rivers to rise and flooding the meadows all along this valley, so that the effect was that of a long serpentine lake of a beautiful greenish color, in which the mountains and glaciers were reflected. The trail was extremely bad, necessitating endless chopping, because of the amount of fallen timber,—the usual after effect in burnt-over country. The mosquitoes also were troublesome, but the beauty of this valley fully compensated for all our discomforts. I do not advise anyone who is seriously troubled by these pests to visit it without head nets and sleeping nets, for all three times that I have been through it mosquitoes have proved a terrible nuisance. Last June they were absolutely unbearable and we were glad to leave as speedily as possible,—though we had to stay longer than we intended.

Further on, as the trail goes over a ridge, Mt. Bass appears, its upper part only being visible; yet it is very inspiring seen in this way, towering as it does above the mountains at the further end of this fascinating meadow-flooded valley. Unfortunately

the view is only momentary, for the trail descends rapidly, and Bess soon disappears behind the nearer ranges. One of our prettiest camps was among the spruces on the edge of these meadows. From it we looked across the marshy pools to the head of the valley, where a beautiful glacier backed by a rugged mountain gives rise to the Stony River. The ice-field is extremely large, and we were anxious to explore it; but as we had other plans in view and a long trip ahead, we could not afford the time. Its beauty and the wonderfully effective picture it made, with the peak towering behind it, impressed us all.<sup>1</sup>

After crossing the summit between the waters of the Stony and Smoky Rivers—which we always referred to as "Marmot Pass," because of the endless number of these animals in the upland meadows—we dropped down rapidly to Twin Tree Lake, so called because of two rocks in the middle, on each of which stands a solitary spruce. It is a beautiful sheet of water nearly two miles long, the color of which is a soft green. Seen from above the effect is even finer, as in general the color of these lakes is more intensified when one looks down upon them from an elevation. Twin Tree Lake is set in a deep basin, surrounded by mountains of between 9,000 and 10,000 feet. At its head is a green meadow, or muskeg, and the stream flowing in carries so much mud and dirt from above that quite a delta has been formed at its mouth. The subsequent discoloration of the water extends far into the lake, causing a blemish on its exquisite colored surface. From its southwestern shore the green timber extends far up on the mountain sides, until it gives place to the lower rock-slopes and slides of scree under the cliffs. Then comes the snow and ice of the glaciers above, from which protrude the rocky peaks themselves. Altogether the composition of lake, mountains and glaciers is very delightful, suggestive as it is of peace and solitude.

From here, as we dropped down to the valley of the Smoky, we came to a little rocky, partly timbered ridge, on which we stopped a minute to take in the view. Behind was our pass,

<sup>1</sup> At a meeting of the Alpine Club in London on November 7, 1911, Mr. Sturges spoke very enthusiastically of the upper part of the Stony valley, especially of the range on its northern side, as a field for interesting exploration.

on one side of which the range seemed to be set on end, for the strata were perpendicular and presented a saw-toothed outline. Among these peaks was Mt. Hoodoo, which Professor Collier climbed in the summer of 1911. In front across the valley, to our surprise, we saw a high range, the summit of which was a towering mass of snow and ice. Mt. Bess, situated at the head of Glacier Creek and presenting a dazzling sight under the brilliant sun, was speedily recognized. The mountains about it seemed even higher and a large amount of snow and ice was in evidence. A few minutes later we forded the river, here a stream of about fifty yards in width and now very deep and swift, for the glaciers were melting fast under the hot August sun. We noted that in the early afternoon it would start to rise, and sometimes during the night over a foot would be added to its depth; then about the middle of the morning it usually had subsided to its low level of the day only to repeat the same performance. Just below was a mountain, very similar in outline to Cascade at Banff, probably not much over 9000 feet in height, but nevertheless impressive with its rugged rocky buttress and cliffs. On a blasted tree near its base was a register of Professor Collier's party, recording the height of this peak, which they had ascended.

From the minor peaks, that we climbed during the next few days in the course of our hunting, we were able to size up the country about us very well. East of the river the mountains are low and insignificant, while of those on our side some were interesting and rather bold in outline, though none seemed any higher than the one just mentioned. From the valleys up which we hunted it was possible to see some interesting country, but no high peaks appeared. At the head of Wolverine Creek, which is south of Mt. Bess, are some fine looking mountains carrying a vast amount of snow and ice, also two large glaciers; but, as it snowed all the time, it was impossible to form any estimate of their height. Although we did not on this trip follow the Continental Divide sufficiently closely to make accurate observations, what we saw in the summer of 1913 and 1914, and what we heard, led us to believe that north and northwest of Mt. Bess and its neighboring peaks the mountains become lower. Here rises the Jack Pine River, flowing some distance in a northerly direction. Where it turns easterly

another fork comes in, whose source is quite close to the headwaters of the Muddy Water River. We later hunted all over this last mentioned region, finding no high mountains, but having fine views of Mt. Bess and its surrounding peaks.

We continued down the Smoky River, spending over two weeks chopping our way, though it was only a comparatively short distance; but the valley has been burnt over, and the fallen timber obliterating all signs of any trail—if at any time one did exist—made it all but impassable. During that fortnight of steady going we saw no signs of anyone's having been down that part of the valley before us. In one small side valley, up which we hunted, we found a beautiful lake over a mile long, which we called "Cascade Lake." At its head was an open meadow, dotted here and there with clumps of spruces, beyond which the stream on its way down cascaded over a high rocky wall. On two sides rose the mountains, some with much snow and ice,—probably the northern end of the Mt. Bess range.

Finally we came to Muddy Water River and an old trail,—the first we had seen for several weeks. This we followed, finding it crossed the river a day above its junction with the Smoky and led over to Sheep Creek, another tributary of the latter. Two more days took us to the head of Sheep Creek, where we planned to give the horses a few days of rest,—much needed after their continuous two weeks' traveling,—while we climbed and hunted.

From the first mountain, at an elevation of about 8500 feet, we saw to the northwest and about thirty miles away a view that gave us a great surprise. There from a vast field of snow and ice rose two large mountains, one of which was of enormous size. What a contrast was this group to the small mountains, insignificant in comparison, that lay at the head of Sheep Creek and Muddy Water River! Between Mt. Bess and the region ahead there were no large mountains, nor any snow and ice of consequence. We got the exact direction of our high peak, and, estimating the approximate distance, felt confident of being able to locate it further on, so as to camp close by and explore the surrounding region. Unfortunately we saw it no more that year; for after we had moved over the intervening passes and camped beyond them, it snowed and stormed continually for nearly two weeks, hiding all the mountains from us.

Though our camp was not over ten miles from this elusive peak, we did not realize it until we returned there two years later. As our food supply was extremely low, all the time was spent in hunting, in vain as it turned out, and we had to continue our trip without fresh meat. It was then the end of September and we had already been out the length of time planned for the entire trip; so we started down the Porcupine River, endeavoring to find a different way home, which would avoid the high passes now covered deep with snow. After much difficulty and detention from the two feet of snow-fall that we encountered, we reached Hinton at the end of October with our food supply completely exhausted.

Unsuccessful as our trip had been we had roughly located this new high mountain and, in spite of the bad weather, had been able to appreciate the beauty of the surrounding country, which, with its fascinating lakes, charming valleys and high mountains, so delighted us that we made up our minds to return to explore it further at the first available opportunity.

In 1913 I was back again; but, being unable to take a long trip, I contented myself with several shorter ones, in which we covered nearly all the country from Mt. Robson and the upper Smoky (including the exploration of nearly all its tributaries) to Laggan on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Still we kept in mind the country to the north, and on my return home from the mountains in December vague plans were made, but nothing definite was done until the next spring. In the May number of *Scribner's Magazine* I noticed an article on the Mt. Robson region by Mrs. Elizabeth Parker entitled "A New Field for Mountaineering." Speaking of the view to the north, seen in the various climbs made thereabout by members of the Alpine Club of Canada who held their annual camp of 1913 on the shores of Berg Lake, she said, "many fine snow mountains appear, one of enormous size some eighty miles away which rivals Mt. Robson." This naturally further aroused my interest, as there was no doubt that our peak was the one referred to, the distance of eighty miles being quite correct.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At the meeting of the Alpine Club referred to on page 340 at which Professor Collins read his paper on "The Canadian Rockies North of the Yellowhead Pass," Mr. Anney reported that when he tried to ascend Mt. Robson he saw what looked like a tremendous peak to the northwest in the morning, but it afterwards disappeared; as he too had previously seen the same unknown mountain.

Our trip was speedily planned, and soon after the middle of June, 1914, C. R. Cross, Jr. (a friend of mine from Boston), Fred Brewster of Jasper, Alberta, two other men and myself were under way with twenty head of horses and food for four months, intending to go through the mountains to the Peace River. Our primary object was hunting and collecting for the Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture at Washington; but we planned to investigate the mountains as thoroughly as possible on our way, and particularly to locate exactly the big peak and explore the surrounding country, provided it did not interfere with our collecting. To hunt the mountains for sheep between the Athabasca and Peace Rivers in our effort to determine the variety that ranged this region was no small task, and it meant slow careful work, especially if the sheep were scarce. For that reason our time was limited and every day was valuable.

On July 13 we caught our first glimpse of the big mountain from an elevation of about 8000 feet on the range along the east side of the Sulphur River. It was readily recognized from its size, shape and location as the peak first seen by us on September 12, 1912 from the mountains at the head of Sheep Creek. We at once concluded it must attain a great height, for we had a rare opportunity to compare it with Mt. Robson, which loomed up in another direction. The latter was about south by west from us and a little more than thirty miles distant, while the former, which lay northwest by north, was more than sixty miles' away.

Even at this distance, which was fully double that to Mt. Robson, the big mountain, looming up supreme above everything near by, seemed a worthy rival to the highest peak of all. It was a wonderfully clear day, and the sun gleaming on both mountains made them very beautiful indeed. Our enthusiasm was thoroughly aroused by this magnificent sight, and it was with regret that we descended the mountain and returned to camp, for we knew it would probably be more than two weeks before we should see our friend again. We continued on our course, swimming our horses over the Smoky River, which was at its highest stage of the year, then following

\* These distances are nearly exact, this section of the country having been partially mapped and some of the mountains surveyed.





- (1) THUNDER MT., THE FORTRESS AND MT. MOON AT TWILIGHT
- (2) MOUNTAINS AND GLACIERS AT HEAD OF STORY RIVER
- (3) HIGH SNOW-DOME NORTH OF MT. ALEXANDER

From photographs by S. Prescott Fay



(1) MT. GUARDIAN AND PASS TO PORCUPINE RIVER

(2) SURPRISE LAKE

(3) LAKE SABETTE AND THE FORTRESS

From photographs by S. Fredette Fay

it to the Muddy Water River. From the trail high up on the southside of the valley on July 31 we again caught a glimpse of the big mountain—a pleasant surprise for it was entirely unexpected. It was but the shortest kind of a glimpse, because the trail descending rapidly lost it momentarily from view. The trail took us to the head of Sheep Creek. Although it was from the mountain opposite to the camp in this place that we first had seen this peak two years previously, we resisted the temptation to repeat the ascent as it meant losing a day and days were precious now.

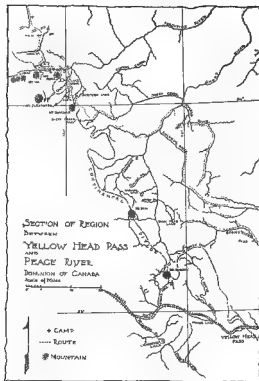
Leaving this camp the scenery becomes extremely interesting. As we turned north, keeping just on the east side of the Continental Divide we slowly ascended a pass, the divide between the waters of Sheep Creek and the Porcupine River. The trail led through park-like groves of spruce which gradually became fewer and fewer until only scattered clumps were left; these in turn were superseded by masses of stunted spruces as characteristic of all alpine country. We looked across the grassy alps to the actual pass stood a few miles beyond—a bare rocky ridge connecting the range which lay exactly on the Continental Divide with the range east of it. A bold, smooth-faced rock mountain, which we named Mt. Guardian, stood on our left like a sentinel at the entrance of the pass. At its foot was an exquisite little lake over half a mile long of a beautiful emerald-green color which changed to a turquoise blue as we later looked back on it under a different light. It sparkled so brilliantly under the sun and its colors were so ever-changing that we called it "Rainbow Lake."

The ice began to appear on the higher basins beyond the top of the pass, which rapidly fell away to the valley below. These glaciers form the source of the south fork of the Porcupine River. This stream we followed for several miles and then the trail once more entered the dense growth of spruce. All of a sudden the timber opened out and we found ourselves at the very edge of a steep descent and to the complete surprise of those of us who had not been there before, at about 1000 feet below us lay a magnificent lake. The name of Surprise Lake was so appropriate that it was instantly christened. It is nearly four miles long and of a deep emerald-green in color. At the southwestern end are bold mountains surmounted by

snow and ice while the other sides are surrounded by rock mountains whose lower slopes heavily timbered with spruce contrasting with the cliffs and peaks above make an ideal composition. In some ways it reminded me strongly of Emerald Lake near Field.

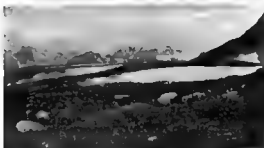
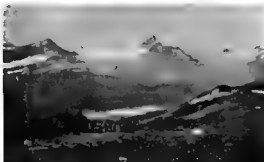
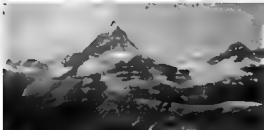
After descending an exceedingly steep trail nearly to the edge of the lake and then ascending through the tall spruces, many of which had fallen and necessitated many detours and much chopping, we emerged from the timber to an open grassy summit the divide between the two forks of the Porcupine River. The meadows were covered with a luxuriant growth of flowers but of all varieties the mountain forget-me-not was the most fascinating giving a tinge of blue to the slopes on which it grew in great abundance. Here another surprise awaited us, for, as we approached the height of land there arose ahead over the grassy summit and not much over twelve miles away, the white icy summit of the big mountain. A short distance below we camped with just its top visible over the glacier on Thunder Mountain another one of our friends of 1912. We climbed up on the slopes east of camp to a basin above to get some specimens of caribou and from there obtained a fine view of the mountain. Another day from higher up still Mt. Robson was visible over sixty miles away. Seen from the Sulphur Hills on July 13 this mountain was twice as distant from us as Robson. Here the conditions were reversed, for Robson was now far away and the big mountain near at hand. This new chance for comparison fully confirmed our belief in its great height. Camp was moved further down, to a little stream that connected the two lakes at the head of the north fork of the Porcupine River.

This series of lakes is extremely beautiful and the region, being only a few miles from the group of high mountains would surely become a rival to the country about Mt. Robson were it not for its inaccessible site. The upper lake of the three small as it is not particularly fine in color still a beautiful one, with the groups of spire-like spruces that line its shores and the towering form of Thunder Mountain beyond it composed an impressive picture. We usually saw it when it was calm with the reflection of the mountain on its surface, and so called it "Lake Wapumoon" which in Cree means mirror. The lower



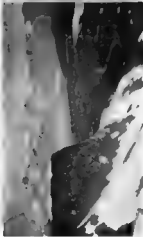
lake, which is fully three miles long, is of a pretty turquoise-blue, at least as viewed from above. A range composed of several different peaks rising rather abruptly from this body of water gives it an appearance of wild grandeur. Last but by no means least is Lake Rabette, which lies hidden in a big basin in the deep timber surrounded on all sides but one by the mountains. This is one of the most ideal spots I have ever seen. Although it must be nearly a mile long it so nestles down at the base of The Fortness that it appears much smaller. It is of the most exquisite emerald-green color, and the contrasting formation of its shores adds greatly to its unique beauty. On one side the spruces grow to the waters edge, on another a big rock slide has forced its way into the lake, while at the farther end is a green meadow dotted with clumps of spruces behind which abruptly rise the cliffs of The Fortness several thousand feet above. We first saw this enchanting spot in 1912, discovering it by accident, and as far as we know no other white man has ever visited its shores.

The big mountain's location, as nearly as we could tell, was about ten miles west-northwest of the intersection of the 54th parallel of latitude with the 120th meridian. It is situated in British Columbia, not over ten miles from the Alberta boundary, and rises on the western side of the Continental Divide, so that its waters all drain into the Pacific Ocean. Running among the glaciers on the northeast slopes and flowing around the east and south sides, thus encircling the mountain for probably one hundred and eighty degrees, we could distinguish a stream which may flow into the Big Salmon River, a branch of the Fraser. Thus on this side the great mass was separated from the intervening ranges by a deep narrow valley from which in places the cliffs of the outlying spurs rise sheer for 1000 to 2000 feet, their vastness adding greatly to the grandeur of the mountain. As for the north and west sides, we could tell nothing from here. Whether the mountain is in turn separated by a stream from the ranges beyond or whether it is connected with them, we had no way of discovering. This view gave us a wonderful idea of the size and contour of the mountain. Above these vast cliffs and partly isolated but-trones is a magnificent series of glaciers, some of which are hanging. Then above this encircling mass of the upper glacier



# MT. ALEXANDER

1. View of Mt. Alexander from the north, looking south.
2. View of Mt. Alexander from the south, looking north.
3. View of Mt. Alexander from the east, looking west.
4. View of Mt. Alexander from the west, looking east.



1 THE FORTRESS MT. DA AND THREE SISTERS FROM MATTHEW'S CAMP  
2 THE FORTRESS AND MT. BOON  
3 THE THREE SISTERS

From photographs by S. H. H. H. H.



round the main peak itself - its steep sides and slopes a mass of *névé*, while its eastern face was streaked here and there by the sliding snow. On the steep face of the peak was seen clinging a curious small glacier, the lower part of which had fallen away, leaving this mass of ice seemingly unsupported. The eastern face appears nearly sheer, but the northern and southern arêtes are not very steep until nearing the summit, when the angle increases greatly. There also seemed to be another arête, a very steep one, on the eastern side. The summit as viewed from this direction is a long fairly level ice-cornice, which viewed through the field-glass presented an irregular broken outline and under a bright sun was extremely fine. It is unquestionably narrow and doubtless slopes at a very steep angle on its western side. At all events it appeared extremely dangerous, and a traverse from one end to the other did not look very inviting. The highest point seemed to be at the northern end. But beautiful as this mountain is, from nowhere is it as striking as Mt. Robson seen from across Berg Lake.

We planned to stay here longer, so as to make another trip nearer to the mountain, but as the following morning was rainy and every day valuable, we reluctantly broke camp and went down the Porcupine River. The following day we left all signs of trails behind and started on the strenuous part of our journey to the Peace River. In following up a small tributary of the main stream, after going through the dense growth for a long time, we came to an opening in the timber giving us a long vista to the west, and there to our surprise towered our mountain (now southwest from us) magnificent in the light of the afternoon sun. Though it was probably twelve miles away, we got an excellent idea of this side, which was pyramidal in shape. A nearer view would have been very impressive.

Two hours later, as we emerged from the green timber to the scattered spruces that led to an open summit above, we turned around to view our surroundings and found an even greater surprise. There across a deep, narrow valley, towered above us not two miles away a steep-sided mountain, a wonderfully striking peak, the top of which seemed so vertical as to be unscalable. It was in many ways a more impressive, certainly a more startling peak than the big mountain, though not so high.

We estimated it was over 11,000 feet. Our camp was more than 6000, timber line here being much lower than further south on the other side of Wilcox Pass. That night we saw it by moonlight and it was a sight I shall never forget. Its setting is extremely fine as it stands out by itself well isolated from any other peak. On its western side several thousand feet below the summit is a large glacier whose melting ice cascades in unnumerable little streams over the cliffs disappearing into the deep valley below—the water forming one of the head streams of the north fork of the Fraser River. This peak which we afterwards found to be Mt. Ida, has a stream in the upland valley east of it which drains big ice-fields beyond from which rise several interesting snow mountains. One of these, which is probably over 10,000 feet high, we named "Mt. Koosa" the Cree word for snow. It may also be seen towering above The Fortress from south of Lake Kakwa. Just beyond the glacier west of Mt. Ida is a range of three peaks which wear much snow and ice. All day, as well as all night we fell from these glaciers to the rocks below in the most terrible avalanches I have ever heard, but unfortunately they were hidden from our view.

The next morning was a fine clear August day (it was the 12th of the month, and we climbed a mountain east of camp, for we assumed that from a point sufficiently far along on the ridge our big mountain would open out from behind Mt. Ida. In this we were not deceived, for as we continued along on the arête at about 2000 feet above camp, the big white summit slowly appeared. For more than two hours we looked at this wonderful view examining every peak in sight as well as every visible aspect of the two important mountains. West of us were some large snow fields with glaciers innumerable for this region of ice extended for many miles to the northwest.

To return to the two big peaks. Both will prove difficult to climb—the higher one because of its extremely steep and dangerous ice slopes, and the ice cornice at the summit. Mt. Ida will be, I think, even more difficult. Indeed it appears to be unscalable from all sides, except the southwestern arête. To reach a point within 500 feet of the top may not be too difficult, but, once here, great trouble will be experienced in reach-

\* Sketched "The Three Sisters" in pencil and wash.—Ed.

ing the actual summit. The final peak is in the shape of an elongated drum set on end, some 300 to 400 feet in height, on top of which is an icy cone dangerously steep on all sides. At the upper end of the southwestern arête is a rocky knob, which is connected with the base of the drum by a narrow steep-sided ice slope. The gap between the knob and the base of the drum is filled with the accumulating snows which it might be dangerous to cross. Once over this there is still the perpendicular cliff and the steep icy cone. Undoubtedly it will prove an interesting climb as well as a dangerous one—fit only for a skilled mountaineer.

Now as for the height of the big mountain. Our estimate was 12,500 feet based on the elevations of our camps as well as of the various ridges from which we viewed it. In all cases it appeared a giant peak and we felt safe in placing its height at this figure. Later on in our trip we found a man who informed us that he knew of trappers who had been on the upper waters of the north fork of the Fraser River and had spoken of an enormous mountain near the Continental Divide, apparently this same one. On returning to Edmonton the end of November at the conclusion of our trip I also met Mr. R. W. Jones, who had spent four years surveying for possible passes for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway extension to the Pacific Coast. He had seen the mountain on one of his survey trips about ten years before and had made frequent use of it in his work. We asked his opinion of its height. His reply was that, as he was looking for low passes and not high mountains, he did not trouble to estimate it as it had interested him, but on his map he had marked it 20,000 feet which figure he considered extremely conservative. Previous to his trip a man named Jarvis crossed from these waters of the Fraser to the Porcupine River going through the valley from which we first saw our snow-capped mountain. It was he that had named it Mt. Ida and Mr. Jones was named the dispute between these two watersheds Jarvis lost. Undoubtedly the big mountain has been known to the Indians who in the past have hunted and trapped

This valley is extremely interesting and beautiful because of a chain of half a dozen snow-capped mountains, each of which is a great height and all of them more or less steeply sloping down to the level of the valley. Mt. Ida is not as high as the other peaks, more from distance than from height, with the mountains between its snow-capped peaks making it much less easily forgotten.

in this region, but who now seldom penetrate thus far from the outskirts of the advancing civilization. But Jones, previous to us, was probably the first white man to see it at such close range. In the absence of any name we called it "Mt. Alexander" after that intrepid explorer Alexander Mackenzie, who was the first white man to cross the Rocky Mountains.

I am sorry that, because of previously laid plans, we were unable to explore this region more thoroughly, and that I cannot give more definite information as to the most likely side from which to make the ascent. Probably the approach from the northeast will prove the most practicable, at least the best side from which to reach the ice-fields below the main peak, which can itself best be scaled either from the northern or southern arête. Unfortunately it will be impossible for me to return to that region again in the near future at least, but I hope some one will be sufficiently interested to make a serious attempt on both of these mountains. The only drawback is their comparative inaccessibility, for it takes over two weeks of steady traveling to reach their bases from Jasper. But good trails, with only occasional fallen timber, lead to the lakes at the head of the Porcupine River, and camp can be made at the very base of Mt. Alexander. To recapitulate, the route we followed was to Grand Cache on the Smoky River by the well-known trail which the half-breeds and Indians still use. There the only difficulty is having to swim the river, but if every care and precaution are used, it can be done safely. Once across, the trail leads upstream a few miles, then up Muddy Water River and over a divide to Sheep Creek, up it to the head, then over the pass to the waters of the Porcupine River. So far as I know, our party is the only one of white men to go in by this way, which I consider the only practicable route, certainly the only one by which the base of the mountains is accessible with pack animals.

The following night after leaving the camp near Mt. Ida, which we always referred to for the sake of convenience as the "Matterhorn" camp, we came to a stream, the north branch of the Porcupine River. We could not have been more than a very few miles from its source, yet it was quite a powerful torrent and, judging from its color, was glacier-fed. Undoubt-



1. MT. 104 ACROSS ONE OF THE LAKES. (2) ROCK LAKE ON HAY RIVER.  
(3) SAPPHIRE LAKE, ON FORK OF WAPITI RIVER.

*From photographs by S. Prescott Fay.*



MT. IDA FROM NORTHWEST SHOWING KNIFE-EDGE ARÊTE  
KINGOOSAG FALLS, EAST BRANCH OF PINE RIVER

*From photographs by S. Prescott Fay*

edly it drains the eastern side of the ice-fields we saw north of Mt. Alexander and west of our previous camp, and the volume of water testified to the immense size of these glaciers. This convinced us that the *névé* must be on the Continental Divide, though we previously had thought it was on the west slope.

As our hunting for sheep and caribou kept us skirting the ranges a short distance east of the Divide, our knowledge of the mountains along it was derived entirely from what we saw during our climbing at these times. But, as we continually had fine, clear weather, the opportunities were excellent for extended views in all directions. Often we could look seventy-five to a hundred miles in every direction: far east, beyond the foot hills into the prairies; west, across the Divide to range upon range of mountains beyond the western slope; south, to the high region now familiar to us; and north and northwest, where the mountains, though carrying some snow and ice, were much lower. North of Mt. Alexander the big glacier area recently mentioned seemed to extend for fully twenty miles, and from it rose several beautiful and interesting snow peaks, one in particular that repeatedly aroused our interest was in the form of a large dome. Its smooth white summit gleaming in the sunlight made it the most conspicuous mountain of all in that region. From here as well as from our climbs near the big mountain, we got some fine views of the Caribou range west of us in British Columbia. No one has yet penetrated their inhospitable valleys, though the height and beauty of their peaks fully justify an expedition. One mountain composed of several peaks seemed to tower above everything else and always attracted our attention.

At the head of the Wapiti River, which apparently has four branches, the mountains fell away rapidly. The southern branch seemed to rise at the end of the big ice-field, and the mountains there probably were the northernmost peaks of that high section. For a distance along the heads of the other branches the country seemed lower. Some distance below the source of the north middle branch is a lake fully two miles wide and four miles long. It is set among the rocky peaks and on two sides high cliffs rise boldly from its waters. The color was very unusual for a mountain lake, being a deep sapphire blue,—a vivid contrast to the dark green of the spruces

that lined its shores. Altogether it was extremely effective and the composition was very different from anything we saw during the summer. Its color suggested the name and we called it "Sapphire Lake."

Further along we came to the head of the east branch of the Pine River, at the upper end of which are two small lakes. Judging from the snow mountains to the southwest and the color of the stream, as well as its size, for it was the largest since leaving the Smoky River, it undoubtedly drains extensive ice-fields. Only a few miles below another good-sized fork came in. The valley was low, not more than twenty-five hundred feet above sea level, yet we were not far from the Continental Divide. There were no mountains of any size west or northwest. Beyond, the two largest are Hunter's Peak, lying near the head of the south fork of the Pine, and Canoe Mt., further northwest at the source of the west branch. Though on or near the main watershed and the most prominent and conspicuous peaks for miles around, they only rise to a height of about 6,500 feet. The altitude of the so called Pine Pass, on the divide at the head of the west fork, is only slightly over 2800 feet. Between here and the Peace River the mountains become lower and there are none of any consequence, although Mt. Selwyn close to where that river forces its way through the main chain of the Rockies, rises to a height of about 6200 feet. Consequently, north of the area of large ice-field beyond Mt. Alexander there is nothing of interest to the alpinist.

On our way down the Pine what interested us most were some beautiful falls, which we came upon very unexpectedly. A loud roar fell on our ears and in a few minutes we saw the river cascading ahead of us. Soon we came to a rocky point from which we looked down on the falls and to a big pool below; but from this outlook we had no idea of their beauty. An hour later, as we emerged from the timber at the edge of the river a short way further on, their full beauty was before us and we gazed on an impressive picture. The total drop was about two hundred and fifty feet, but not sheer. The entire stream cascading over the cliffs, the whole effect was much more varied and interesting. The contrast of the clouds of spray, that rose and fell, and of the white foam with the black cliffs



along the sides of the gorge was very beautiful. That night we camped at their base and went to sleep with the roar of the water in our ears. As the pools in the river were full of Dolly Varden trout, on which in the absence of anything else we had subsisted entirely for more than two weeks, we appropriately named these falls the Kincoosno Falls, from the Cree for fish.

Trouble after trouble in the endless maze of down timber hindered our progress from here on; but finally we reached the Peace River and the trading post of Hudson's Hope, where we obtained supplies for the return trip. It was not until late in November that we arrived at Jasper, where our trip had begun in June.

